



Date: February 16, 2015

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Keith Chadwell, Deputy City Manager
From: Mark D. Ahrendsen, Transportation Director
H. Wesley Parham, Assistant Transportation Director

Subject: Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit Project

Executive Summary

Triangle Transit will provide a presentation on the environmental and community data collected for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project. The data available at this time covers the project from UNC Hospitals to the station near Duke/VA Hospitals. Additional presentations will be scheduled at future meetings for the remainder of the project data. The City Council will be requested to provide comments on the project during the public comment period in late summer/fall 2015.

Recommendation

The Department of Transportation recommends that the City Council receive a presentation by Triangle Transit on the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project.

Background

Triangle Transit is developing the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project, a 17 mile light rail transit project from UNC Hospitals to Alston Avenue. Triangle Transit and their consultants are preparing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. The DEIS is scheduled to be released in August 2015 for a 45-day public comment period. During this time, the City of Durham will be requested to submit comments on the project to Triangle Transit. In November, the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization will decide whether to accept the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project based on the DEIS analysis. If approved, the Federal Transit Administration would issue Final Environmental Impact Statement and a Record of Decision on the project, and the project would be eligible to move into the Project Engineering phase.

The alignment options from UNC Hospitals to the station near Duke/VA Hospitals have been studied and the environmental and community data for the DEIS is available. East of the Duke/VA Hospital station, the alignment has been modified based on the North Carolina Railroad's track spacing requirements. The Durham City Council and Durham County Commissioners received an update on this modification in January 2015. Triangle Transit requires additional time to complete the analysis of the alignment east of Duke/VA Hospitals.

Triangle Transit's presentation will include the environmental and community data on the alignment from UNC Hospitals to Duke/VA Hospitals. Their presentation will focus on five key decisions:

- The alignment over Little Creek;
- The alignment over New Hope Creek;
- The station location near Duke/VA Hospitals;
- The location of the Rail Operations and Maintenance Facility (ROMF); and
- To build or not build the project.

Issues and Analysis

Triangle Transit staff have prepared tables comparing the environmental and community data on the key decisions. These are provided as an attachment.

While no decision is requested today on the alternatives, the Durham City Council is asked to carefully review the presented data, consider if there is additional data needed to inform a future decision, and begin to formulate a position on the key decisions.

Alternatives

The City Council could choose not to receive the presentation. This would not help provide the information that City Council needs to provide informed comments during the 45-day public comment period.

Financial Impact

There is no direct financial impact for the City of Durham related to this presentation. However, the presented alternatives have different cost implications that could affect the competitiveness and financial viability of the Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit project. The project's local funding share is to be provided by the local sales tax and vehicle fees administered by Triangle Transit. There may be additional City of Durham costs related to station area infrastructure, impacts to economic development, impacts to City transportation facilities and utilities, etc.

SDBE Summary

Department of Equal Opportunity/Equity Assurance did not review this item for compliance with the Ordinance to Promote Equal Business Opportunities in City Contracting.

Attachments

Triangle Transit Presentation
Duke/VA Station Evaluation Matrix
Rail Operations and Maintenance Facility (ROMF) Evaluation Matrix
Leigh Village ROMF Map
Farrington Road ROMF Map
Patterson Place ROMF Map
Cornwallis Road ROMF Map
Alston Avenue ROMF Map
New Hope Creek Evaluation Matrix
Little Creek Evaluation Matrix
Draft Environmental Impact Statement Glossary